

REMARKS

Claims 11-28 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 26 is amended to conform to the language of claim 11. No new matter is added.

Entry of the amendment is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 because the amendment places the application in condition for allowance and does not raise any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration. Specifically, claim 26 is amended to recite a "wafer-like body to be treated," to mirror the language already present in claim 26, as well as in claim 11. Entry of the amendment is thus respectfully requested.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for allowing claims 27 and 28.

I. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §112

The Office Action rejects claims 11-26 under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, for failing to comply with the written description requirement. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action asserts that the specification does not support the recited feature that the supporting part and column member are formed of a monolithic piece of the same material. However, Examples 1 and 2 of the instant specification describe this feature.

The specification states that "two silicon carbide members, each of which had a cross sectional form of a circular arc" are used to form the recited monolithic supporting parts and column member. See page 31, Example 1 of specification. These arc shaped members 3, 4 are attached to the top and bottom plates. See Fig. 4 and page 24 of specification. Then, a circumferential blade 30 of a grooving processing machine is used to create grooves 8. See Fig. 4 and page 25 of specification. This process can be seen in Fig. 4, in which the monolithic arc shaped members 3, 4 are cut into by the blade 30, thus forming the supporting parts 6 and the supporting parts 3a, 3b, out of the original monolithic silicon carbide member.

As such, the specification clearly discloses the recited feature that the supporting part and column member are formed of a monolithic piece of the same material. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 11 and 26, and claims 12-25 depending therefrom, is respectfully requested.

II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

A. Claims 11-19 and 26

The Office Action rejects claims 11-19 and 26 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 5,482,558 to Watanabe, et al. ("Watanabe") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,488,497 to Buckley et al. ("Buckley"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action acknowledges that Watanabe does not disclose "the supporting parts and the column member being a monolithic piece of a same material." The Office Action asserts that combining Buckley with Watanabe cures this deficiency.

However, this assertion lacks merit because it would not have been obvious to try and combine Buckley and Watanabe. Claims 11 and 26 recite that the "wafer-like body to be treated is...supported along a circumferential part of [its] lower surface." Watanabe allegedly discloses a vertical boat which supports a wafer along a circumferential part of its lower surface. By contrast, Buckley discloses supporting wafers by providing support for the ".7 R boundary region" of the wafers. See col. 5 lines 43-45 of Buckley. In other words, Buckley does not support the wafer along the circumference, as disclosed by Watanabe, but rather at a point some 30% towards the center of the wafer.

Those of ordinary skill in the art recognize that supporting a wafer-like body along its circumference has several benefits, as compared to supporting a more central portion of the wafer, as disclosed by Buckley. Specifically, centrally supporting a wafer results in a higher likelihood of a flaw in the more important central region.

As such, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have tried to combine the features of Buckley with the vertical boat disclosed by Watanabe. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 11 and 26, and claims 12-19 depending therefrom, is respectfully requested.

B. Claims 20-25

The Office Action rejects claims 20-25 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Watanabe in view of Buckley, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,474,987 to Nakai, et al. ("Nakai"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.


Claims 20-25 depend from claim 11. Because claim 11 is now in condition for allowance for the reasons detailed above, Applicant asserts claims 20-25 are also now in condition for allowance at least based on their dependence on an allowable base claim, as well as for additional features they recite. Further, Nakai does not supply the subject matter lacking in the rejection of claim 11. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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